



Department of Justice

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RHÔNE-POULENC BIOCHIMIE, SUBSIDIARY OF AVENTIS,
AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO FIXING PRICES
OF A MEDICAL PRODUCT INGREDIENT

Company Agrees to Pay \$5 Million Fine
Rhone-Poulenc Executive Indicted For Role in Conspiracy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rhône-Poulenc Biochimie S.A., a subsidiary to the French-based pharmaceutical company, Aventis S.A., today agreed to plead guilty and pay a \$5 million fine for participating in a conspiracy to fix prices and allocate customers for a chemical used to slow the rate at which dyes disperse throughout the body during x-rays and other medical imaging procedures, the Department announced. Additionally, a St. Louis, Missouri federal grand jury indicted Eric Descouraux, the company's former sales and marketing director for active pharmaceutical ingredients, for his role in the conspiracy.

"Today's cases demonstrate the Division's resolve to use the full powers of our antitrust laws to prosecute those involved in anticompetitive behavior that harms American businesses and consumers," said R. Hewitt Pate, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department's Antitrust Division.

According to separate charges filed in U.S. District Court in St. Louis, Rhône-Poulenc Biochimie S.A. (RP Biochimie), whose principal place of business is in Elbeuf, France, and Eric Descouraux, a citizen and resident of France, participated in a conspiracy from November 1990

through December 1999 to fix the price of, and allocate customers for, pharmaceutical grade methyl glucamine sold in the United States and elsewhere.

According to court papers, employees of RP Biochimie met annually in Europe over a nine-year period with representatives from a competitor to agree on the prices each would charge their customers worldwide. Additionally, the conspirators exchanged sales and customer information in order to monitor and enforce adherence to the agreed-upon prices and allocation of customers for pharmaceutical grade methyl glucamine sold in the United States and elsewhere.

RP Biochimie and Descouraux are charged with violating Section One of the Sherman Act, which carries a statutory maximum penalty of a \$10 million fine for a corporation and a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment and a \$350,000 fine for an individual. The maximum fine may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victim of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Anyone with information concerning price fixing in the market for pharmaceutical grade methyl glucamine should contact the Antitrust Division's Dallas Field Office at (214) 880-9401, or the FBI Dallas Office at (214) 720-2200.

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